

SUMMARY OF SAVANNAH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – June 13, 2006 Coastal Georgia Center – Savannah, Georgia

The first Savannah Advisory Committee Meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at the Coastal Georgia Center on June 13, 2006 beginning at approximately 10:00 AM. Michelle Caldwell, Deputy Project Manager and leader of the Savannah area component of the study welcomed the group. The group made self-introductions. The following individuals attended the meeting.

Name	Company	Phone	E-Mail
Ben Swilley	Crider Transportation	912-562-9178	bswilley@criderinc.com
Ron George	Saft America	229-245-2943	ron.george@saftbatteries.com
Harry Crabtree	Coastal Transport	800-235-8467 (Savannah)	hcrab@comcor.com
Mike White	Gypsum Express	904-219-4264	mwhite@gypsumexpress.com
Tom Thomson	Savannah MPO/MPC	912-651-1446	thomsont@thempc.org
Roger Burdette	R&K Logistics	912-966-1062	roger@randklogistics.com
Brian Davis	R&K Logistics	912-966-1062	--
Randy Weitman	GA Ports Authority	912-964-3916	rweitman@gaports.com
David Weir	GA State Road and Tollway Authority	404-893-6126	dweir@georgiatolls.com
Marc Cutler	Cambridge Systematics	--	--
Andrew Smith	HNTB	404-946-5700	asmith@hntb.com
Doug Allen	HNTB	404-946-5700	dougallen@hntb.com
Claudia Bilotto	GeoStats	--	cbilotto@geostats.com
Tamrat (Tim) Kassa	GDOT	--	Tamrat.kassa@dot.state.ga.us
Jamie Cochran	J. Cochran & Co.	404-285-7577	jacoch@bellsouth.net
Dike Ahanotu	Cambridge Systematics	--	--
Michelle Caldwell	GDOT	--	michelle.caldwell@dot.state.ga.us
Tom McQueen	GDOT	--	tom.mcqueen@dot.state.ga.us

Andrew Smith, the Project Manager for the HNTB consultant team explained that the study began in April 2006. The study team includes HNTB Corp., Cambridge Systematics, GeoStats, and J. Cochran & Co. to assist in the project. The purpose of the study is to examine the feasibility for a truck-only lane system in Georgia and to identify locations where truck only lanes can be feasible from the standpoints of engineering, operations, and economics. The study will be complete by October 2007. Mr. Smith pointed out that truck volumes are increasing rapidly nation-wide and in Georgia. GDOT has been studying freight and truck travel issues for a long time. There are several major planning initiatives across Georgia that involve truck travel (see handout).

Mr. Smith began the slide presentation that gave an overview of the project's purpose and scope, the role of the Advisory Committees, the study work program, the analysis framework for the project, the project schedule, and the relationship of the project to other on-going state and regional studies. Dike Ahanotu discussed the data collection activities being undertaken for the

project. Jamie Cochran described the planned public involvement and stakeholder coordination activities and tools to be used to communicate about the project (i.e. website, etc.). Copies of the meeting agenda and slide presentation are attached.

Group Exercise

Part of the meeting was devoted to a break-out session where the group was asked to respond to a set of questions. The responses are shown below.

What are the most significant issues impacting truck travel in Georgia?

- Traffic congestion, especially on I-285 in Atlanta (in order to access I-20 and I-75).
- Bay Street in Savannah – the area has a lot of pedestrians, narrow streets, visitors who are unfamiliar with the area, on-street parking with car doors opening, buses, etc. which make it difficult for trucks in the area. More truck service in the Downtown Savannah area is expected. The problems occur generally 24/7.
- There is also a need for through trucks to use Bay Street. Most of these are dump trucks going to destinations on the east side of town (Gypsum, GA Pacific, etc.). Bay Street is the short-cut because trucks do not use Oglethorpe Street, etc.
- The MPO has considered a tunnel to facilitate east-west traffic, but it is very expensive.
- The east side industries may be phasing out. The MPO is looking at some short-term solutions to address truck travel in the corridor.
- MPO is also looking at the drayage trips (i.e. short trips from the port area to nearby distribution centers).
- The just-in-time delivery system is causing more trucks to be on the road, especially for more imports from the coastal area. These are typically 18-wheeler trucks.
- Truck lanes are needed on Bay Street, but there is no room to put them.
- Highway 21 is a problem corridor for trucks because (1) there is commuter traffic, (2) distribution centers located along it, (3) it is a port access route (4) additional traffic lights are being installed and (5) lots of new residential growth is occurring nearby.
- Effingham Parkway is under development. There is not a Chatham County terminus now, but in the future, it will tie to the Northwest Parkway which will act as an alternative route for cars and trucks.
- Route 307 near the port is generally OK.
- Route 25 does not have enough lanes to handle all the traffic.
- There is a project planned to fix Brompton Road which is an access route to the Port.
- The I-16/I-95 interchange geometrics are a problem in all four quadrants.
- There are truck grade problems on the Talmadge Bridge.
- There is a lane drop problem on Hutchinson Island.
- The ramp from I-95 to Route 21 northbound is often backed up in the afternoon – not enough storage space for vehicles.
- Trips to Atlanta take twice as long as they should.
- We have to deal with congestion in Atlanta by charging our customers more.
- Congestion in Atlanta usually affects deliveries within a 60-mile radius.
- Trucking companies are imposing a minimum charge for deliveries near Atlanta.
- The driver's time is the main cost component.
- If the driver does not arrive in Atlanta by 5 PM (rush hour), they will often wait an hour or an hour and a half to drive through.
- Drivers are paid according to the most direct route and are often given driving directions to follow. If congestion or something else occurs, they have the ability to change their route based on good judgment.
- Truck lanes on I-285 West would be a big help.
- Truck drivers mostly use the interstate routes as much as possible.

- Deliveries in Atlanta will continue to be a problem.
- If we deal with through truck movements in Atlanta, that will be helpful.
- Drivers typically use directions from customers for the "last mile" of their delivery routes (i.e. usually from the interstate to their facility).
- Local delivery movements are often off the interstate highways – mostly LTL (less than truckload) terminals deal with these.
- Another issue is land use – we cannot change it, so we need to deal with it.

What factors should be considered in determining whether truck only lanes should be built in Georgia?

- Question: what do we want to accomplish with truck lanes? We should look at the "before" and "after" situations.
- One objective of truck lanes should be to reduce accidents, especially avoidable rear-end collisions which are the most costly to trucking companies.
- We should try to minimize lane changes, especially from left to right which are more difficult because the driver's visibility is not as good.
- System to system interchanges, i.e. from I-285 to I-20, I-75 to I-285, etc. are generally OK.
- Grades would be an issue with truck lanes.
- Speed limits in truck lanes would be an issue – some trucks run at 65 MPH. Some run at other speeds. Some companies want their trucks to run at 5 MPH under the posted speed.
- We need longer turn lanes along Route 21. There is a lot of truck traffic needing to make turns.
- Question: what kind of benefits does the truck industry want to see with truck lanes?
 - Firms want to be able to run heavier trucks and doubles.
 - Firms want more reliable travel times.
 - Accidents need to be cleared quickly.
 - Permitted loads (oversize trucks, etc.) need to be accommodated.
 - Increased road maintenance costs and load limits are affecting truck traffic – trucks need better routing.
 - Cost to users of the truck lanes should be a consideration.
- Question: what factors should be considered to identify candidate truck lane projects?
- Traffic volumes
- Hours of operation depending on truck volumes
- Safety
- Whether the truck lanes are two lanes or one lane.
- Whether the lanes are on the left side or right side – moving across traffic to exit is a real problem, especially in Atlanta.
- Cost/Benefit of the lanes

Who should be involved in developing public policies on truck only lanes?

- Trucking companies (of all types)
- Truck drivers
- Payers of the funds that support highways
- Port Authority – selling point for the Port is good access

How can we get these people involved?

- Advisory Committee Meetings
- Incentives
- Georgia Motor Trucking Association events – GMTA is starting to have regional events in Albany, Savannah, etc.
- City of Port Wentworth – dealing with some truck traffic issues

Responses to Questionnaire

A short questionnaire was distributed to the meeting attendees to get feedback on some topics related to truck lanes in general and the study in particular. Of the total number of attendees (8), excluding GDOT and consultant personnel, the team received five returned surveys (about 63% response rate). Not all respondents answered every question.

How familiar are you with the concept of Truck Only Lanes?

- Somewhat
- Not very familiar
- Somewhat
- Somewhat

Besides traffic congestion, what do you see as the three greatest transportation issues or concerns regarding Truck Only Lanes?

- Safety and lane changes
- Safety, fuel savings, and driver satisfaction
- Safety, cost benefits, service loads
- Safety, time savings, truck control

What transportation corridors and areas of the State are of most interest to you in terms of truck and freight-related traffic?

- Atlanta area and port area of Savannah
- Atlanta area – I-285 and intersections/exchanges with I-20, I-75, and I-85.
- I-95 and Savannah port
- Bay Street in Savannah

Do you believe Truck Only Lanes are needed in Georgia? Where? Why?

- Yes – for congestion and safety.
- Unsure.
- Yes – for safety and reliability
- Yes for I-285 West in Atlanta – congestion.

Has your business been impacted by:

Truck-related accidents

- Yes
- No
- Yes
- Yes

Traffic congestion on Georgia's interstate highways and other important routes?

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

Lack of efficient truck routes in Georgia?

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

Other difficulty in transporting goods and/or services on Georgia's interstate highways and other important routes?

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

Overall, how efficiently do you think Georgia's freight mobility is?

- Somewhat efficient
- Somewhat efficient
- Somewhat efficient
- Somewhat efficient

What advice do you have for the project team for exploring the feasibility of truck only lanes in Georgia?

- Look at cost and reliability
- Contact GA Motor Trucking Association for GMTA member involvement
- Acquire representative from all facets of trucking

How did you hear about this meeting?

- Letter from GDOT
- Letter from GDOT
- Letter from GDOT
- Another truck carrier

Was the time and location of the meeting convenient for you to attend?

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes

Please share your suggestions on improving the way public meetings are conducted as part of this project.

- None

JAC:c